SIX SEASONS

BARADA UKIL

INTRODUCTION: SARDAR K.M. PANNIKAR

DESCRIPTION IN VERSE SHRI HARINDRANATH CHATTOPADHYAYA M. P.

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विभाग A-1
पुस्तक क्रम संख्या 124
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BY

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PREFACE

These paintings depicting *Six Seasons* were painted about 20 years ago, in Rajput and Pahari style but in wash technique. The set was acquired by the late Sir Akbar Hydari (Sr.) for the Hyderabad museum (Deccan), from the Indian art Exhibition I had organised at the Fine Art Society's Gallery, in New Bond Street, London, in the autumn of 1933.

I offer my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Sardar K. M. Panikkar, Ambassador for India in Egypt, for writing the *Introduction*, and to Poet Harindranath Chattopadhyaya, M. P. for writing the description of the six paintings in verse. I am also, grateful to my young friend Mr. Jyotish Bhattacharjee for the cover design, and to Messrs. Dhoomimal Dharamdas, Publishers of the Portfolio.

Barada Ukil

New Delhi, 16th June 1953.

INTRODUCTION

By

Sardar K. M. Panikkar

Mr. Barada Ukil's place in the world of modern Indian art is so well established that anything that is said in praise of his work can only be superfluous. Though, as a result of physical disability, he has had in recent years to give up painting, the quality, distinction and originality of his earlier work assures him a place of honour, among the galaxy of talented artists who have contributed to the growth of the new artistic traditions in India.

Barada Ukil is the second of the three Ukil brothers who selected Delhi as the centre of their artistic activities. Of them the eldest Sarada Ukil who died prematurely in 1940, was generally recognised as an artist of outstanding genius, and as leader of the artistic revival in India. The youngest

of the three Ranada Ukil earned fame as a painter of murals and was selected for decorating the India House in London.

The artistic life of India's capital owes much of its vigour to the work of these three brothers. As the founder and the managing editor of the 'Roopa-Lekha', the leading Art magazine of India, and as the founder and General Secretary of the All-India Fine Arts and Crafts Society, Mr. Barada Ukil has contributed more than any other individual to the growth of interests in matters relating to fine arts in Delhi.

Whatever be the judqement that history has in store for the work of the new School of Indian artists, there can be no doubt that during the last forty years India has witnessed a widespread revival of artistic activity. It is essentially an evidence of the success of the movement that the younger generation should now be revolting against its ideals, techniques and forms. The sense of experimentalism, of a restless desire to try new forms or follow new fashions shows that the mind of the new generation is awake and is in that sense to be greatly welcomed. I do not hold with those who think that we should be exclusively national in art, that we must consciously keep out foreign ways and ideas in art. In all great periods of artistic creation in India as elsewhere, foreign influences have been a powerful factor. While, therefore, I welcome the desire of our younger artists to look round and draw inspiration from all quarters, I am equally convinced that the true expression of Indian artistic genius can only come in terms of India's own life and environments. It is only the Indian earth that will preserve our roots and put out new blossoms. It is only the Indian sky that will reflect our lights and the symbolism of our emotions can only be expressed in terms of the luxuriant growth of nature in India. By all means let our artists perfect other techniques and invent other forms, but unless their paintings are related to Indian life, they will have no place in our national art.

The six paintings which are reproduced in the present portfolio represent only

one facet of Mr. Ukil's genius and yet they are sufficient to show the distinctive qualities of his work. Mr. Ukil is, in the genuine Indian tradition, in believing that the mastery of line, form and colour, essential though it is, for all great art, does not by itself create art. At best they only produce technical perfection. It is only when the painting represents also an idea, or creates an atmosphere, or interprets some emotion that it is transformed into art. In this matter, painting comes nearest to poetry, for in poetry also we can have technical perfection, music, rhythm and texture of word composition without breathing the spirit of poetry, which as in painting includes and transcends these and must possess something distinctive and individual in the realm of mind to make it really beautiful.

The paintings included in this portfolio represent the six seasons. Summer, the Rains, ***Sarat***, ***Hemanta***, Winter and Spring. These are traditional classifications but appropriate to Indian conditions. Moreover, they have a long and unbroken association with the emotional and artistic life of India, with its mythology, with its festivals, with its general ordering of social life. The elaborate symbolism attached to the seasons extends to trees, flowers, birds, animals and even music. To the foreigners the description of seasons in Indian poetry may appear to be stylised, because no Indian poet (I include of course artists among them) could think of the season of spring without the mango blossoms and the *Koil*, of *Sarat* without the white clouds, of the rainy season without the peacock dancing. But that is not mere stylisation. It is an essential characteristic of the Indian view of life which comprehends all nature in its vision.

The ideas behind Mr. Ukil's representation of the seasons are rigidly classical. To see how true they are to the Indian conception of things one should compare the paintings with Kalidasa's *Ritu Samhara*, the pageant of seasons. Though Mr. Ukil's representation of ideas nowhere becomes the illustration of a text, it will be obvious that the general atmosphere of the great

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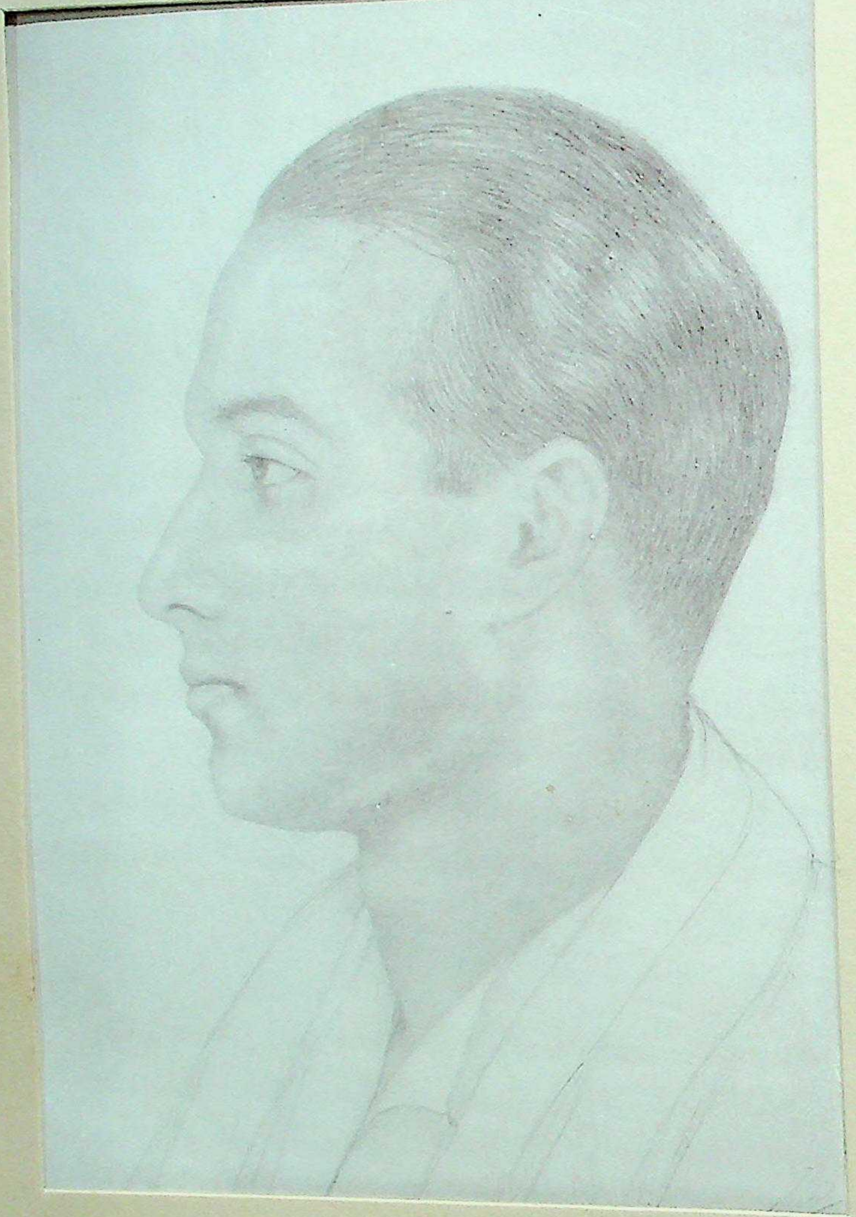
poet's vision of the pageantry of nature in its changes of colours, moods and atmosphere is reflected effectively in the paintings. This is especially so in the two beautiful paintings of *Sarat* and Spring. The beauty of the Indian scene after the rains, with its clear air, with the perfumed earth enveloped with white tipped *Kasa* grass, with abundant water in the rivers, with the beautiful white clouds decorating the blue sky here and there are all effectively and beautifully reflected in the painting. Truly, the painting in this case achieves the beauty of a poem.

Again, the representation of Spring, when all nature takes a new life is alike gay and grave. The lady at her toilet, the trees in blossom, the birds and animals in pairs and the general harmony of the scene convey irresistably the revived feelings of happiness and hope.

The criticism that Mr. Ukil's treatment of these themes is formalistic is not one to which I attach importance. No doubt they are formal, but the question is whether the formalism has deadened the idea or whether the idea stands clear, purposeful and striking through the accepted forms. Mr. Ukil has, to my mind, demonstrated once again that a genuine artist can show his originality and genius even if he keeps to accepted art forms.

In all these six paintings Mr. Ukil seems to have consciously achieved a miniature effect. Especially in his painting of Spring he seems to have deliberately accepted the conventional perspectives of Rajput and Pahari paintings. He seems also in his treatment of the trees, leaves and the general background of the picture caught the genuine spirit of the masters of early Indian miniature painting.

I do not have the technical competence to discuss the quality of Mr. Ukil's paintings from the point of view of the artist's craft. That is the sphere of the art critic. From the point of view of one who is interested in art, I would venture to say that this small portfolio represents an achievement of which any artist may be proud.



BARADA UKIL

SELF PORTRAIT (1935)

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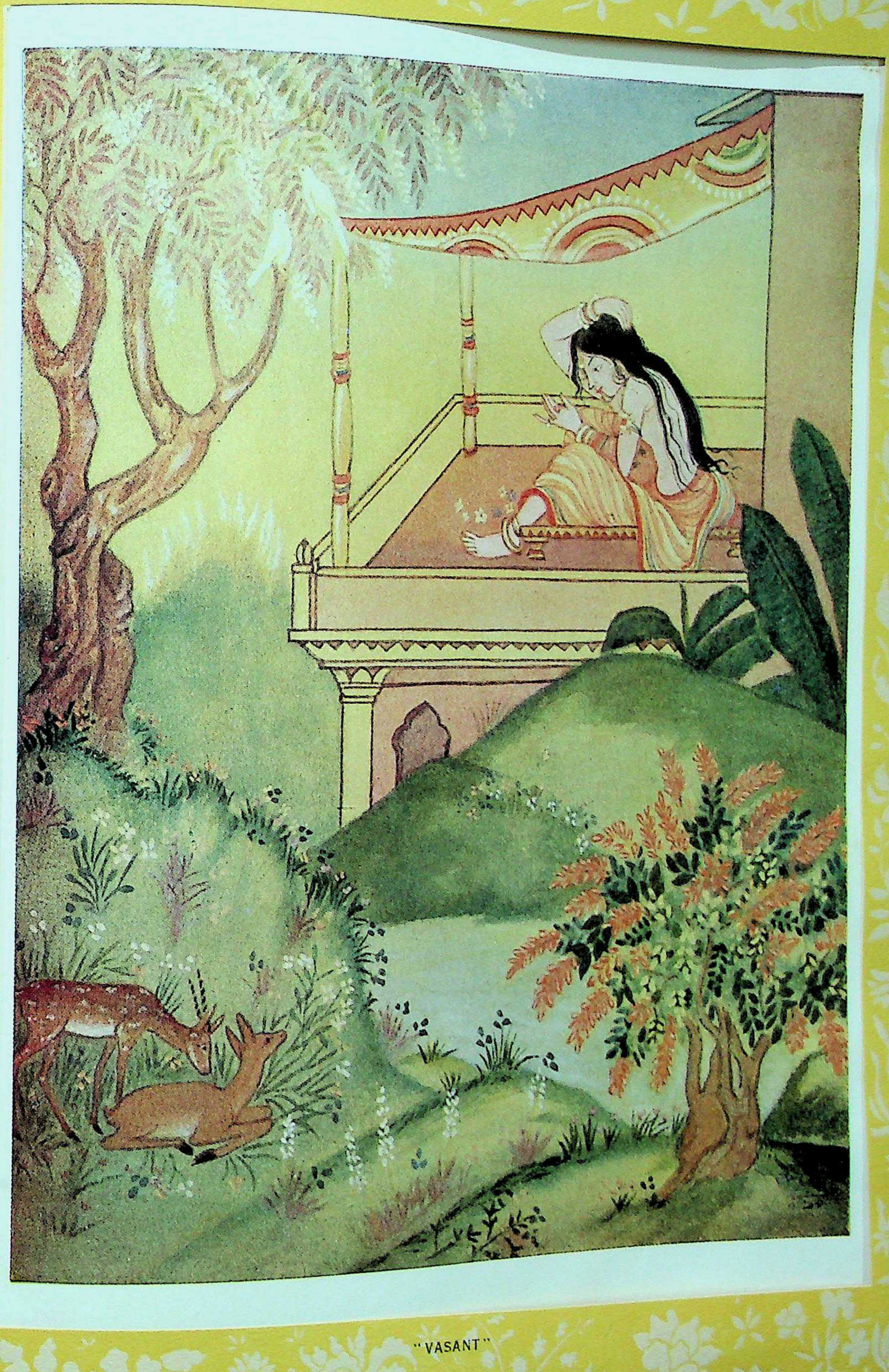
"VASANT"

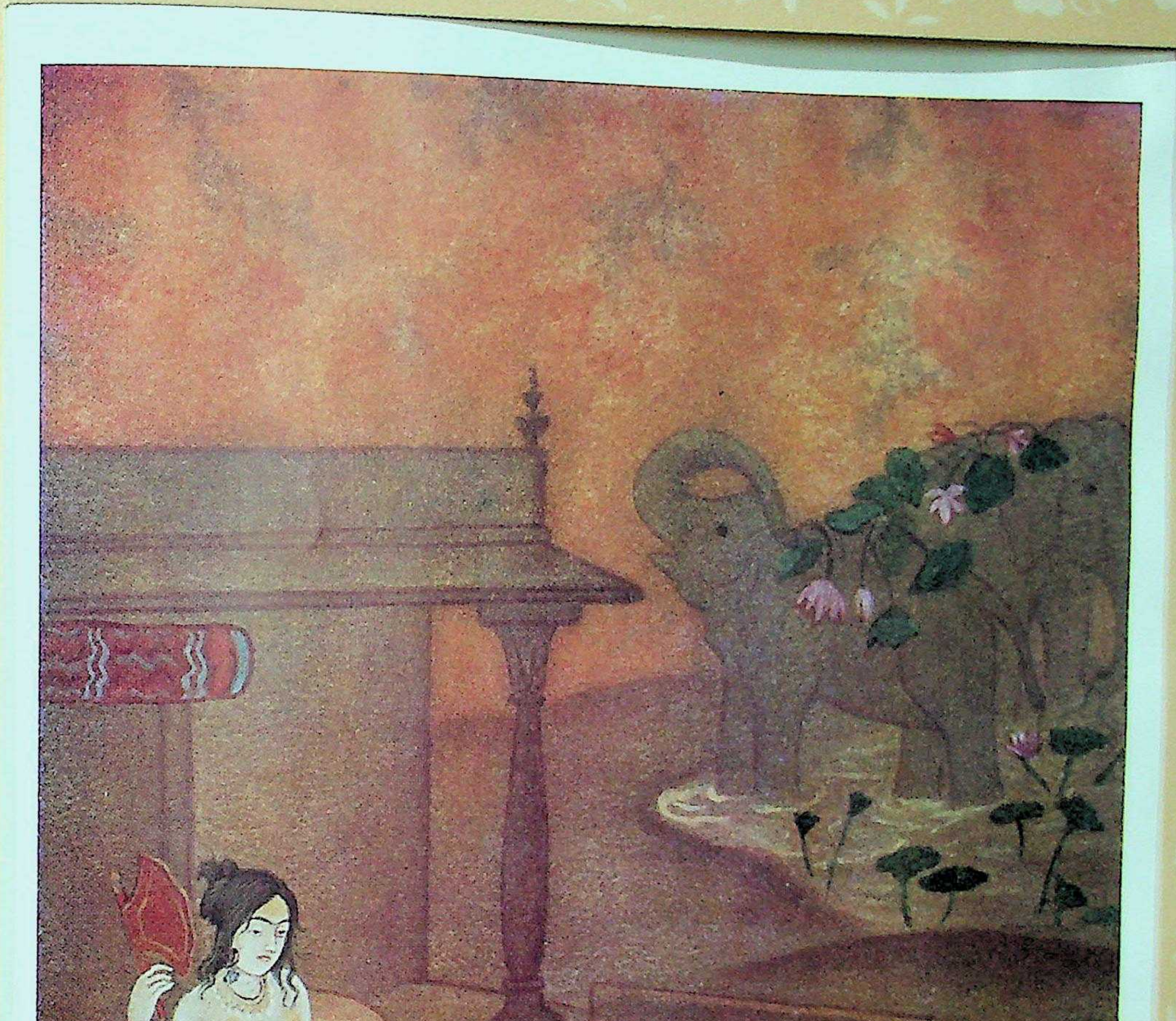
HERE is the springtime,
bloomtime, wingtime,
perfume intoxicates, Love cannot wait ;
dark bees settle
on blossom and petal,
while everything, everywhere, looks for a mate.



"VASANT"

"GRISHMA"

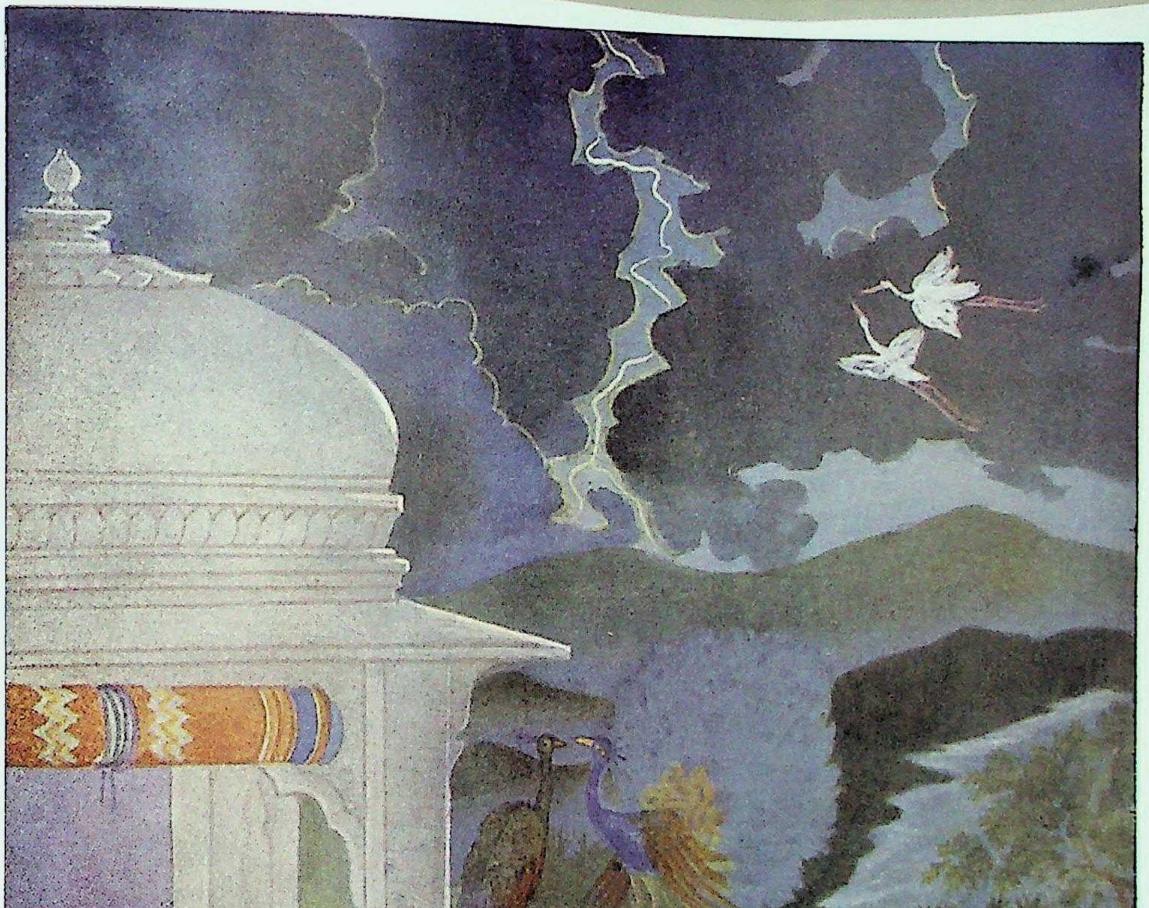
SUMMER is golden, summer is bare,
the sun is an eye that is wide-awake ;
the elephant's trumpeting rends the air
and shakes the lotus leaves on the lake.
The painted peacock is ill at ease,
it calls to its peahen all in vain—
it sits like a statue amidst the trees
and holds its breath for a shower of rain—
since rain for the peacock is sheer romance
and works it into a painted dance.



"GRISHMA"

"VARSHA"

HERE is the magical season of rains,
the earth with summer is no more bowed—
cutting through clouds a pair of cranes,
their orange legs like streaks in the cloud !
the lightning flashes,
wild thunder crashes,
the painted peacocks are
thrilled again.........
with rapture laden
a lovely maiden
says : I am drunk with the
season of rain.

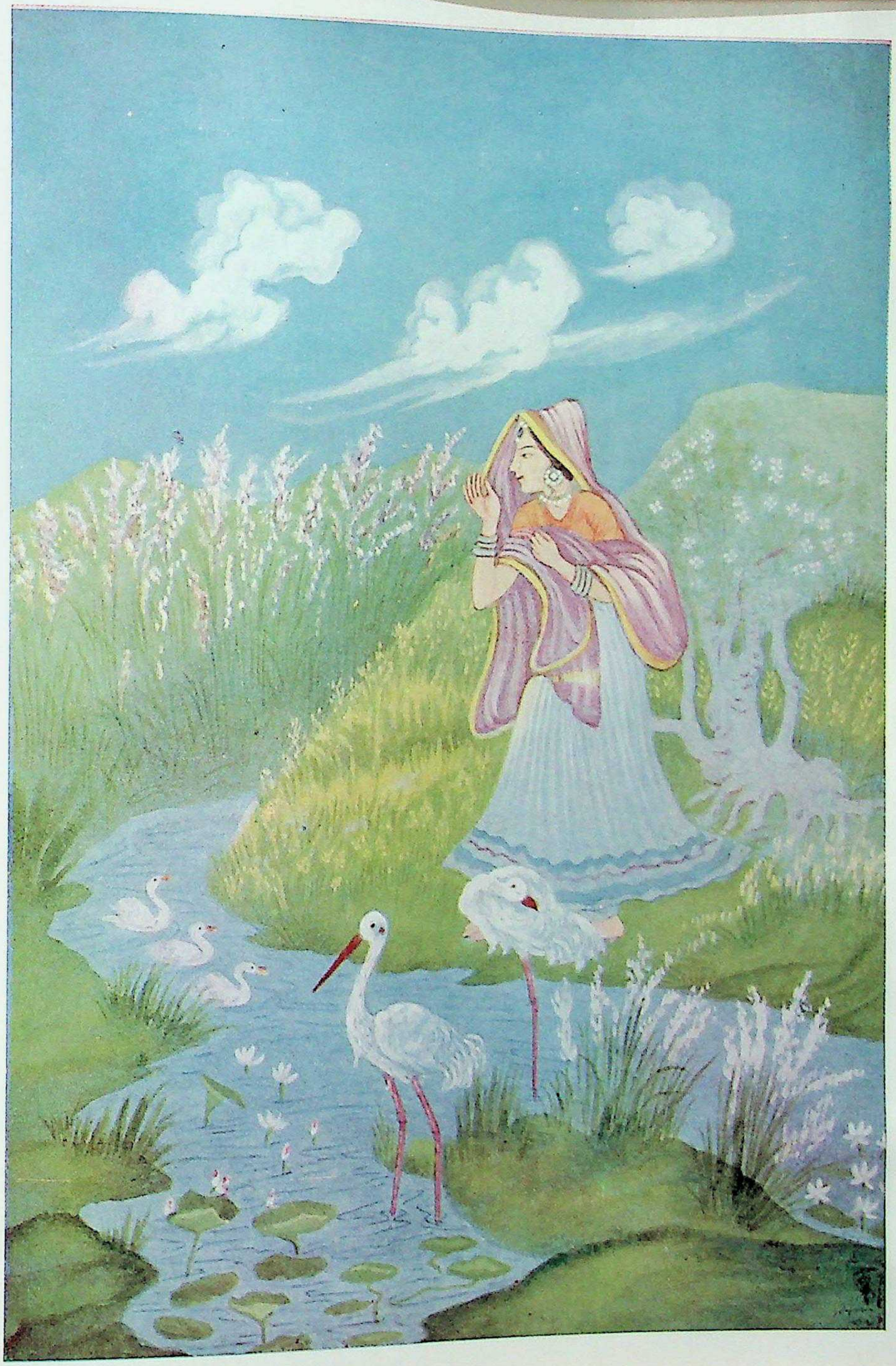


"VARSHA"

State Museum,
Lucknow.

"SHARAT"

WHITE clouds sail across the sky
like little ferries and pass us by—
sail and cover, sail and cover
the sky which is tinged a delicate blue;
one lonely maiden looks for her lover,
chanting alone the whole day through:
I am waiting for you.........
while the cranes stand quietly
there, in the stream,
as though they were carven
of drowse and dream.



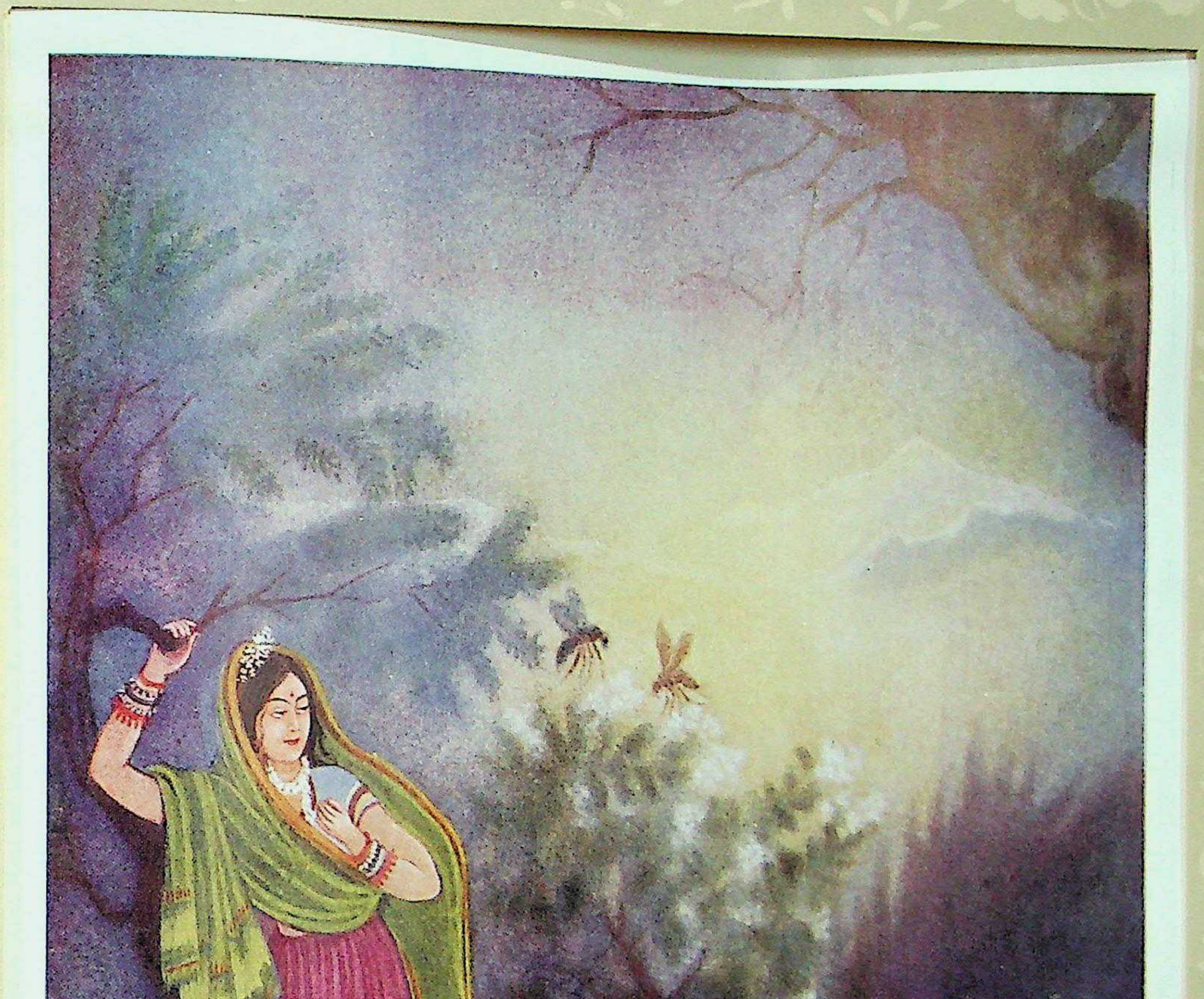
"SHARAT"

State Museum,
LUCKNOW.

"HEMANTA"

BETWEEN the autumn and winter,
Lavishing stain and stripe,
Ere the end of the year, the Tinter
Is tinting the fruits to ripe
Warm hues with His magical brush,—
Each fruit is a rounded hush.

Dark bees tremble and travel
From warm-lit bloom to bloom,
While Nature is out to unraval
the mystery of her own womb:
The mystery of hued hours,
Of gaudiest fruits and flowers,
Of luscious and fiery brightness
Which ends in the cyclical doom
Of cold bare winter whiteness.

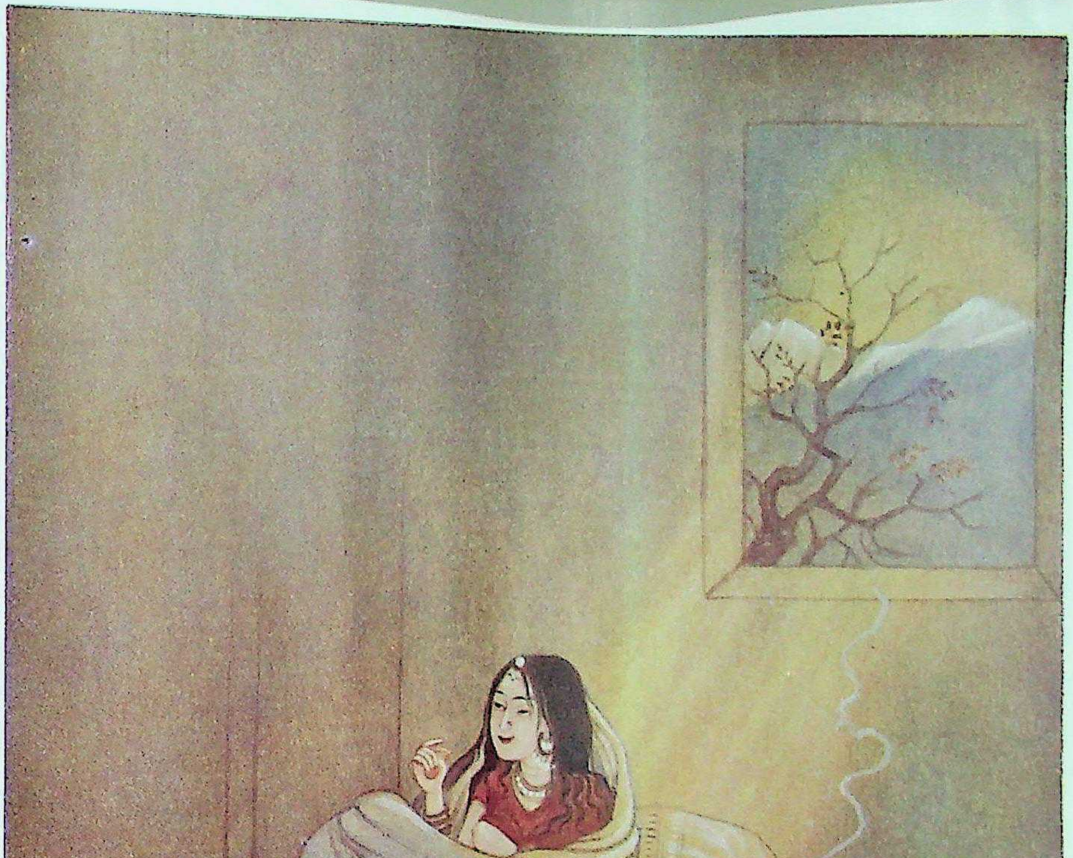


"HEMANTA"

State Museum,
LUCKNOW.

"SHISIR"

Is winter whiteness a doom or the casting off of
a burden
of flowers which have had their bidders and
fruits which have
had their buyers?
Ah friend! the winter is surely
a season that brings us
guerdon
of a new cycle of perfumes, of colours
and loves and fires.



"SHISIR"